

MIDWEST COMPUTER GENEALOGISTS

NEWSLETTER

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HAPPY NEW YEAR 2020!

Marjorie Slavens

At our November, 2019 meeting, we decided not to continue Midwest Computer Genealogists because we had no Program Chair to plan and schedule our monthly programs. However, we have now decided that we will continue to function in 2020 through our newsletters. Julia Morse, one of our speakers and a contributor to the newsletter, would like to help us continue providing information to our mailing list and to other family researchers by placing the newsletters on the net. President Al Morse and I are willing to continue to share our family research through articles in the newsletter. Julia said she would also submit articles for the newsletter. We strongly encourage our readers to write for publication and provide suggestions.

At our November meeting, we decided to contribute our remaining funds to the Genealogy Branch of the Cass County Library, and we will do so when we determine what fees may be required to preserve our newsletters on the net. We welcome articles about your family research or suggestions you may have about information you have found through your own research. Our status as a non-profit organization is recognized by the state of Missouri through August 31, 2020, and we can then decide if we will continue to function as described above. We hope you have a happy and prosperous "New Year"!

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Al Morse

I had not looked at Family Search for some time, so, I decided to check it out. I had entered a family tree that only went to our great grandparents. I was amazed when I saw that some of the family lines went well beyond what I had entered. Some of them went a long way back, even one birth at 11BC.

I figured that, as other people had done research and added them to their family tree, these were added to other folks family trees as well. This is fine, but I have discovered at times these were not always accurate. As far back as some of these went, I also imagined that they hired professional searchers and paid them to discover these trees. So, I take these additions with a smile and hope that they are true. We all have 2 parents, some may have step parents, 4 grandparents, and 8 great grandparents. This keeps multiplying if the line continues to be found. Some lines stop quickly.

I started with the Farnsworth line in my mother's family. My cousin, Laura Frances (Seals) Scott, did a lot of research on this line before computers were used for genealogical research. She worked back to our 7th great grandfather, Thomas Farnsworth. He was born in England in 1648 and came to America in 1677. I continued going back in this line. The name did change a few times with Farnworth, deFarnsworth, to Siward deFarnworthe who lived from 1129-1220. He was my 24th great grandfather.

HISTORY AND GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

Marjorie Slavens

Another line that I found interesting was from my father's side of the family. His mother was Alma Dona Miller and her 3rd great grandmother was Naomi Richardson. The Richardson name changed many times, going from America back to England to Scotland to France to Rome Italy to Emperor Marcus Aurelius. He was Emperor of the Roman Empire from 161-180. He was my 67th great grandfather.

For my wife, Dorothy Jean Newcomb, a couple of these lines proved long and interesting. Dorothy's great grandmother was Lillie Ethel Burke, and her grandmother was Sarah Ann (Wright) Burke. The line starts in America, arriving in the 1600's, to England to Sweden to Denmark to King Kong Frodi of Denmark. He lived from 333-424 and he was Dorothy's 50th great grandfather.

Another line for Dorothy goes from her 3rd great grandfather, Lines P. Newcomb, and his wife, Ruth Grice, and it is through Ruth that the line continues. Thomas Clark Cordery arrived in America in the 1700's. The family line goes from England to France to the Roman Empire including Emperor Flavius Valerius, 272-337, to Judea. Dorothy's 66th great grandfather was Herod Agrippa I, King of Judea. He lived from 11BC-44. He heard the Apostle Paul just before Paul was sent to Rome.

As you go back on these lines, you have many decisions to make about which direction you go. This is very time consuming, but I did enjoy it. There are still lines I need to check out. I did one line and was wowwed by who I saw, but I erased all of the lines, figuring I could return to it. However, I have not found it again yet. So, I will not divulge that name until I actually find it again. Seeing these family trees reminded me of watching on PBS television the show, "Finding Your Roots", with host Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. He always gave his guests a family tree and some of them also went way back in time.

History is a very important part of genealogical research. It is impossible for us to understand the lives of our ancestors for so many generations if we do not understand the historical context, the customs, the traditions, the geography of the places in which they lived, all of the political, economic, and social environment in which they lived, etc. We say that we are family historians, but what does that mean? It is certainly not limited to the dates and places in which they lived.

As we search for our ancestors, we spend much of our time studying history in reverse rather than chronologically. In this country, we are very fortunate to have Census records through which we can begin with our known family and trace our older family members back decade by decade and generation by generation. We are fortunate to have information about whole families beginning with the 1850 Census, which lists the names and ages of every member of the families. Additional information is listed in succeeding Census records to provide us with supplementary information. Some of us were very concerned when the 2000 Census forms were received, and there were very few questions on most of the forms. As family historians, we want to know more and more about the lives of our ancestors, and this Census will not be as helpful as some earlier Census records when our descendants look back to the 2000 Census.

Our family stories are very important, and it is essential for us to write them down so our children, grandchildren, and their children can know about them when we are no longer available to answer their questions. However, we need to be certain that our information is historically accurate. My great grandmother, Laura Hesler Slavens Hesler (1863-1946), said her grandfather, Jacob Hesler, and one of his three sons served in the Confederate Army, and her father and another brother served in the Union Army. Jacob Hesler,

1763-1851, served in the War of 1812, married Mahala Murray in 1838, and he was dead before the Civil War. All three of his sons from this family served in the Union Army.

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We are fortunate now that many of the records which we use in our research are posted on the net, but we need to verify these listings with original document searches. We certainly cannot assume that all of the records and family trees that are published on the net are totally accurate. Many of us have found information about our families on the net that we know is not accurate because we have the original source material. My great grandfather, Charles Merlin Kerr (1863-1962), said he was born in Dewitt County, Illinois, but he was 2 years old when his family moved from Illinois to Kansas; his father, John Kerr (1810-1870) , died when Charles was 7, and he lived with other families because his mother could not care economically for all of her children after John's death. John Kerr and his family lived in Piatt County, Illinois, the next county to the east of Dewitt, not in Dewitt in the 1860 U.S. Census and the 1865 Illinois State Census. Descendants of The family of one of his mother's brothers, James Crawford, still lived in Dewitt County, Illinois in the 1980s, but the Kerrs did not live there when Charles was born.

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A QUESTION OF HISTORY

Marjorie Slavens

My friend, Jane Dodson, who was the Genealogy SIG (Special Interest Group) Leader at Foxwood Springs for many years and, along with Lois Adams, first introduced my mother and me to Midwest Computer Genealogists when it met at Bannister Mall, said she never really enjoyed history in high school because there was too much emphasis on names and dates of historical events and not on its philosophical, political, economic, and social development. Jane went to Hawaii in December, 1941 to marry Al Dodson, a Naval officer stationed there, and she was present for the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, which

began World War II for the United States. However, she said her genealogical research really developed more completely her lifetime love of history and her desire to learn about all of its dimensions.

I thought I wanted to teach College History when I entered college, but that is not the path I followed, although History was a minor field for all of my degrees. I taught courses in Spanish and Spanish American literature, language, and culture, and history was always a major part of all of these courses.

When I was a junior in high school, my teacher asked all of us what we were doing when Pearl Harbor was bombed. None of the students could answer the question, and, in frustration, she asked me. I told her I was a small child and did not remember the event. I was told she never asked the question again. My older brother and one sister certainly remembered what they were doing on that date, but I was more interested in dolls than in historical events at that time. My high school history teacher taught names and dates, but she did not really teach enough "History" in her History classes, we did not go beyond the Civil War (1861-65) in either World or American History as they should have been taught.

I have learned a great deal about history from our genealogical research. Our Welty family was originally from Switzerland. They were Mennonites, and because of discrimination, they moved to Germany. They were opposed to compulsory military service, and they did not remain long in that country. Peter Welty and Michael Miller, our immigrant ancestors in that line, came to America in 1727. Peter and his son, John (Johannes) Welty gave land in York County, Pennsylvania where their Mennonite Church was built, and my mother and I were able to visit the church, not the original building, and the cemetery there. Peter's great grandson, John Welty (1800-75), who lived in Fairfield County, Ohio, apparently did not practice the religion of his

ancestors, but some of the characteristics of those ancestors remained with his descendants through the generation of my grandfather and his brothers, who were strongly opposed to the marriage of their younger sister to a Catholic. We could not find any other contemporary reason for their opposition to the marriage. They were reserved and not very communicative, a characteristic I saw in my mother and her siblings. I knew nothing about this religious tradition until our family research into the ancestors who came to this country from Switzerland and Germany. We studied the history of Switzerland and the Mennonites to be able to understand the lives of these ancestors.

Most of my ancestors came from Germany, Switzerland, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and England. Except for the Westmeier family of my paternal grandmother, Edna Marie Westmeier Slavens, my other ancestors came to America in the mid-18th Century. John Westmeier and Mary Nolte came to Indiana in 1841. Their son, Christian, my great grandfather, was born in this country, but he never learned to read and write English; German was spoken at home, even in my grandmother's generation. She did not learn to speak English until she went to school.

I have audio recordings of my father, who died in 1983 and videos in which I interviewed my mother. These recordings are historical records of my parents that have been passed on to their grandchildren and provide their own historical perspective to generations who did not know them well.

Although the countries from which my ancestors came were not a major part of my formal education, my understanding of these countries, their culture, their traditions, and their historical development has come from our genealogical research.

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